

HER fingers slowly relaxed, and the revolver dropped on to the thick carpet. The shot echoed and re-echoed through her brain. She stood motionless, waiting for the sound of hurrying feet in the corridor, for excited French voices, for the door to be flung open.

She would go with them, unprotesting. They would never believe her story. Self-defense! They would smile at that, finding her here in Blair Talbot's room at this hour. Self-defense? When for years the thing which she had most craved had been to learn that Blair Talbot was dead! Could she not have defended herself without using the revolver, had she really wished to do so? No, no, it had been self-defense — too late now for futile self-probings.

Her eyes avoided the floor, noted dully the rosebud trimming on the pink-shaded light on the bedside table. It was a duplicate of the one in the room she and John had. "Veilleuses," they called them, those little night lamps always left by the maid to welcome one home at night. Its soft light laid a warm glow over the bed, but threw giant shadows on the greyed-pink walls.

Why didn't they come for her? Had no one heard the shot? It had seemed loud enough to wake all Paris. Seemed, yes; but *actually*? Actually it need have interested no one. It might have been the backfire from a passing motor, it might have been merely the dropping of some heavy metal object, it might have had a dozen innocent explanations. But if they had not heard, must she try to escape them? Her eyes widened with fear.

She stared at the long sprawling body on the floor, at the red splotch on the blue-striped pyjamas. He had worn pyjamas of the same blue that night at the Reindeer Club five years ago. . . .

For John's sake, she must be clever. Not to try to escape was spineless, cowardly. She must be cool, clear-headed.

If she put the revolver into his hand? No, there were things about powder-marks, about whether a wound could have been self-inflicted. And they might trace the revolver. John's revolver! Better attempt no false clues. Just be very sure to leave no clue at all.

She looked down at herself. Night dress, dressing-gown, slippers. Had she had anything else with her? The revolver of course. She stooped and picked it up from the floor. Finger-prints? She had touched nothing. The letter? It was safe in the pocket of her dressing-gown.

There remained but one hazard. If someone should see her returning to her room! Slowly she opened the door an inch. She heard only her own heart. She opened the door wider and looked out. The corridor was empty.

A moment later she closed the door of her own room and leaned against it. No one had seen her!

From the further twin bed, John's heavy breathing came reassuringly. The headache tablet which she had slipped into his "nightcap" had not failed her. She crept into her bed, put the revolver under the mattress, and lay staring into the darkness.

Blair Talbot was dead. Now she could really forget the past. Now John would never know. Strange that she could love John so much and yet act a lie to him. It had been impossible for her to be simple and honest with John, perhaps because she loved him too much to spoil his own image of her. Or was it merely a fierce pride? If John had said, "I know, and I understand absolutely," she could not have married him. For no one could understand what she herself did not understand. There are some things which must be buried forever. The girl of that night five years ago at the Reindeer Club was less a part of herself than was an ugly dress which she had worn but once.

John's breathing had grown lighter. If he should wake and come into her bed! Should feel the hump made by the revolver under the mattress! She had been too terrified to return it at once to his suitcase; it had seemed imperative to be back in her bed, to lie still until her heart stopped thumping, until her throat became less parched and tight. Now if John spoke to her, she could answer in her normal voice.

She rose quietly, fumbled her way to the suitcase on the luggage-stand, and replaced

No Clue Left

by GERTRUDE MACAULAY SUTTON



The girl crept
along the corridor.
No one was in sight.
She hurried through
the open door

the revolver. Then she felt along the wall until she reached the door to the bathroom. There she tore the letter into small pieces and disposed of it forever. She switched on the electric light boldly, but the face in the mirror frightened her. The eyes in the mirror had seen something which they could never forget. As long as she lived, she would remember the rosebuds on the *veilleuse*, the huge shadows on the greyish-pink walls, the red splotch on the blue-striped pyjamas.

She must sleep, must awake looking fresh and usual. She took an aspirin and returned to her bed. Again she lay staring up into

darkness. Already what had happened seemed inevitable, the inescapable climax of the past five years. Instead of sleep, the events of the previous day crowded her brain, rehearsed themselves in sharp detail.

Leaving her room, going toward the elevator, to meet John downstairs for luncheon.

That voice behind her! A man's deep voice. "Hello, Harriet!"

Blair Talbot! In Paris, at their hotel!

"Forgotten an old friend?" He laughed and held out his hand, his dark, droop-lidded eyes intimate with the memory of that which she had so resolutely forgotten.

Her hands were cold; she couldn't speak; she couldn't think. The hotel corridor appeared to be narrowing and lengthening, drawing out into a long yellow tube. The black iron lift-cage became toy-size. Suddenly it seemed that she had always known this would happen; as if she had been walking in a sunny garden, knowing that somewhere the path would give way under her feet.

His laugh had its old mocking ring, and his voice its low resonance. But he was thinner. Deep lines bracketed his mouth and winged his eyes. He had aged ten years instead of five. How thin and hard and too well-dressed he looked!

"So you haven't forgiven me for not answering your letter? Ah, but I kept it, my dear. Such a sweet little reproachful letter! So Victorian, so indiscreet!"

She turned from him without speaking. She hadn't spoken to him since that night at the Reindeer Club. The next morning she had departed by an early train before the other members of their skiing party were out of bed. For her chaperon she had left a note, pleading a suddenly remembered engagement in town. To Blair Talbot she had written that she never wanted to see him again.

He put his hand on her arm. "I want to talk to you. Do you suppose it is just chance that I am here? Oh no, my dear. I keep track of my old friends, even if I am living in Europe. I knew you had married John Ogilvy, and I saw Mr. and Mrs. John Ogilvy listed among the Americans recently arrived in Paris. Women forget easily, but I have never forgotten you." His voice lowered, became a caress. "You were very sweet, my dear."

"My husband is waiting downstairs for me. I can't —"

"He can wait a few more minutes. I've waited years — to see you again. The fact is, Harriet, I'm in a bit of a jam, and I knew you'd help an old friend." He smiled. Then he was calmly asking her to lend him money.

It didn't seem melodramatic or unreal. With his touch on her arm had come that feeling of leaden inevitability.

"I can't get a thousand dollars without telling my husband why I want it."

"I think you'll find a way of getting it," he said slowly. "For an old friend — a fair exchange — I thought you might like to have

back your letter." He nodded toward a half-open door behind him. "That's my room — 739. Conveniently near your own. Come for your letter *tonight*, my dear."

Luncheon. Telling John that she was sick to death of Paris.

"Good!" John agreed heartily, smiling up at her over his filet mignon. "Let's move on to London."

"I'd love to. Let's leave tomorrow morning!"

Her voice had sounded too eager, she thought.

"Fine! But how about your dresses?" he inquired.

"I've only one still to come, and it can be sent on. My last fitting is this afternoon. And John, I'd rather not pay a Paris dressmaker by check. There may be customs spies at the bank. Oh, I don't mean to smuggle. But we may be abroad months. I might not like one of the dresses. I might burn a cigarette hole in one, and give it to a chambermaid. I'll declare whatever —"

"How much cash do you want?" John asked indulgently.

"A thousand dollars. I'll pay at my fitting."

"Dollars?"

"I mean francs — a thousand dollars in francs." She had felt her face get hot, as she stammered weakly, "I — I always translate them into dollars in my mind."

But John suspected nothing. Good, honest, unimaginative John!

"Then you want about 16,000 francs. I'll go to the bank this afternoon."

"You'd better go right after luncheon, dear, and then I'll have it when I go to my fitting. I'll see to the packing, and while I'm at the dressmaker's you can be arranging about tickets to London."

She began to talk animatedly about London, her eyes watching the doorway, afraid that Blair Talbot might enter the dining room, might even come over and speak to John and herself. She talked on and on, afraid to

She stared in horrified fascination at the widening splotch of crimson

stop lest John return to the subject of paying the dressmaker and perhaps kindly suggest going on from the bank and settling the bill himself.

At last the luncheon was over, and John had gone to the bank. She packed hurriedly until he returned with the money, then together they had left their room, John to arrange with the hotel porter about tickets and reservations, she to go to her fitting. With them in the elevator had been Blair Talbot. John had nodded coldly, but as she

bowed, her eyes had promised Talbot his "loan."

When she got back from her fitting, John was waiting for her in the lobby. For a moment she had faltered, had felt that she could not go through with it. These petty lies seemed so contemptible, so much more shameful than the thing they hoped to hide.

"I lost the money, John."

"Lost it? How?" He looked at her handbag.

"It — it must have been stolen. I remembered about women having their handbags snatched out of their hands sometimes, so I

"I knew you'd come. I knew we'd be friends," he said.

She laid the 16,000 francs on a table beside her.

"This ends it. If you ever ask anything more of me, my husband will settle with you."

He shrugged, took the money and put it in his pyjama pocket. Then he handed her the letter, smiling.

"Read it, my dear. Always best to check up these little things. I might be giving you another lady's letter by mistake."

There was no need to read it. She knew her own handwriting.

"Oh, but read it! You'll see that you were once very fond of me." And then his arms were around her. "Why not be friends? I'm very fond of you —"

dent. . . . Permit me to present Monsieur Duclos of the *Sûreté*."

Sûreté! That meant — police! Her arms dropped limply to her sides. She swayed and felt the blood drain from her lips, leaving them cold.

But how did they know? What had she forgotten?

"A very regrettable incident," continued the manager smoothly. "Last night a man was shot — in our hotel — on this floor."

A new voice cut short the manager, an abrupt voice gruff with authority. "The man who was shot is registered from the same town in America as are you and your wife, Monsieur."

She caught her breath. She had left no clue. The clue had been planted when the hotel register had been signed. She could not think, only she felt that horrible inevitability. Things must go on and on, there was never any escape. . . .

The manager continued:

"Did you or your wife know Monsieur Talbot?"

She heard her husband's calm answer:

"I knew him — slightly."

"Do you know of his having any enemies?"

"I certainly know of no one who would have killed him."

John's voice was so confident, so honest. The voice of the *Sûreté* became a shade less gruff.

"You were planning to leave for London?" he asked.

"We leave in an hour."

"Perhaps. I must have your permanent address, some reference —"

"The American ambassador is a personal friend."

The voice changed, was friendly. "Since you know nothing of this affair, and as Monsieur Talbot does not wish to prosecute the inquiry —"

Illustrations by
Karl Godwin

The tiled walls of the bathroom were swaying as if in a ship in rough weather.

"He's not dead?" John asked.

"No. He will recover. The bullet is now being removed. An extraordinary case. Monsieur Talbot says that a masked man entered his room and shot him. Yet the motive was not robbery, for we found 16,000 francs in the pocket of the pyjamas Monsieur Talbot was wearing."

The tiled floor rose up to meet her.

She was on her bed, and John was bending over her.

"That's better! Drink this. All right now?" he asked.

John knew! He must know. She had lost 16,000 francs, and 16,000 francs had been found on Talbot.

John lit a cigarette. "Well, I guess we know now who picked your pocket. Talbot must have done it while he was in the elevator with us just after I gave you the money. I always knew he was a swine."

She closed her eyes. She was afraid she might burst into hysterical laughter. Dear John! Adorable, unimaginative John!

"Feel well enough to dress, dear? Good. We ought to be out of here in half an hour, if we're to make our train," he said in a matter-of-fact voice.

John Ogilvy waited until his wife had returned to her interrupted bath; then, glancing at the bathroom door to be sure it was tightly closed, he opened his suitcase.

He took out his revolver and swiftly cleaned it, removing all traces of its having been recently fired.

put the money in a smaller purse in my coat pocket. But when I went to pay the bill, it was gone; my pocket was empty."

She had avoided John's eyes, but he dismissed it philosophically. "Never mind. It can't be helped. But in the future, we'll pay by check."

Swiftly, horribly, the last scene relived itself.

Waiting till John's breathing had become deep and regular. Opening the door cautiously . . . stepping into the empty corridor, then halting suddenly and returning to her room. Halted by the memory of

Blair Talbot's eyes as he had said, "Tonight, my dear."

Going to John's suitcase and taking out his revolver. She knew nothing about revolvers, didn't even know whether this one was loaded; but if Blair Talbot tried to take more than money in payment for her letter, the mere sight of the revolver would be a protection.

His door was slightly ajar. She entered and closed it swiftly behind her. He came to her, smiling, both hands outstretched.

She tried to struggle. His lips were on hers, his hands strayed. She remembered the revolver in the pocket of her dressing-gown.

The noise of the shot echoed and re-echoed through her brain.

When she wakened, the sun was streaming in through the opened French windows, and the *garçon d'étage* was laying out breakfast on the round central table. John was already up and dressed.

While they breakfasted, the porter came for their trunks. Soon they would be in London. Soon they would be back home in America.

She went into the bathroom and filled the tub. As she was about to step into the water, a knock sounded on the bedroom door.

She heard John call, "Come!"

A moment later she recognized the suave voice of the hotel manager. Every muscle grew suddenly tense. She flung her bathrobe around her and stood close by the door, listening. But they couldn't know anything. The manager must just be coming to wish them an effusive goodbye. He was that sort — bowing and smiling at them in the lobby, bowing before their table in the dining room and asking solicitously if their meal pleased them.

"Good morning," John said pleasantly.

"Good morning, Monsieur Ogilvy." She knew he was bowing smoothly and smiling with his incessant pleasantness. "I am very sorry to disturb you, but a regrettable inci-